

# NORTHERN VIRGINIA RESERVOIRS RANKED FOR LARGEMOUTH BASS

District fisheries biologists sampled major reservoirs in northern Virginia in spring 2002-2006. The samples were conducted during daytime with boat electrofishing gear targeting largemouth bass and were conducted in a manner that allows several comparisons to be made concerning these fish populations. Since many anglers seek largemouth bass, and fish considered over 15 inches are considered “preferred” nationwide; the following summary contains information about bass over 15” (preferred size).

The term “RSD-P” (below) stands for “relative stock density of preferred fish” – which is the proportion of bass in a population over eight inches (stock size or “recruits”) that are also at least 15”. Thus, this index describes the size structure of the population . . . the higher the number – the larger the percentage of the population is composed of big fish. The index “CPE-P” stands for “catch per effort of preferred fish.” This is a measure of how many bass over 15” are collected by biologists during a set unit of effort (in this case, 1-hour of electrofishing). Thus, the higher the number is, the more abundant big bass were during the sample.

Several factors can bias the data (e.g., weather conditions, fish behavior), but samples were conducted with efforts to minimize these biases. The following is a summary of these data with lakes ranked by CPE-P:

Reservoir	Rank	Year	Size (AC)	County	CPE-P	RSD-P
Burke	1	2006	218	Fairfax	38	55
Hunting Run	2	2006	420	Spotsy.	37	32
Mtn. Run	3	2005	75	Culpeper	37	21
Occoquan	4	2002	2100	Fairfax	35	56
Motts	5	2004	160	Spotsy.	32	33
Orange	6	2005	124	Orange	31	30
Anna	7	2006	9600	Spotsy. et al.	29	37
Pelham	8	2005	255	Culpeper	28	41
Brittle	9	2006	77	Fauquier	21	26
Abel	10	2005	185	Stafford	20	24
Curtis	11	2005	91	Stafford	17	18
Germantown	12	2006	109	Fauquier	14	7
Breckinridge	13	2006	47	Stafford	12	9
Ni	14	2002	411	Spotsy.	11	26
Lunga	15	2005	477	Stafford	11	13
Beaverdam	16	2002	350	Loudoun	8	45
Smith	17	2004	250	Stafford	2	6

All of these lakes are considered “small impoundments” except Lakes Anna and Occoquan; and Lake Anna is, by far, the largest. Therefore, it is not entirely appropriate to compare them all “head-to-head”, as catch rates at large reservoirs are usually lower than in small impoundments (which makes Occoquan’s second place even more impressive).

John Odenkirk, fisheries biologist, noted many of the best district lakes (for big bass per hour) were consistent producers year-after-year. Of special note, **Burke Lake**, a public fishing lake owned and intensively managed by the Department in DC’s backyard, continues to have a phenomenal bass population and has never been dropped from first place. However, a new reservoir, **Hunting Run**, almost pushed it out this year. This new water supply lake in Spotsylvania will be open to the public in spring 2007 and boasts an outstanding fishery thanks, in part, to a cooperative effort between VDGIF (stocking) and Spotsylvania County (habitat enhancement). For more information, contact Fisheries Division in Fredericksburg (540-899-4169).